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Statement submitted by International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

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Statement

Human rights-based approach: a way to achieve the Millennium Development Goals

The Commission on Legal Empowerment of the Poor reported that tens of millions of people, including 70 per cent of children born in the least developed countries, lack a legal identity, as a result of their very existence not having been officially acknowledged. Reporting on General Assembly resolution 63/142, entitled "Legal empowerment of the poor and eradication of poverty", the Secretary-General of the United Nations stated that the development strategy should be set by the people living in poverty and for the people living in poverty. Furthermore, it should also be guided by the human rights principles of equality and non-discrimination, participation and accountability. In her book *The Unheard Truth: Poverty and Human Rights*, the Secretary-General of Amnesty International called for fairly administered laws to transform societies and for empowering people to claim their rights and engage with the institutions that set and administer laws.

We recommend that Governments:

(a) Provide education so that people can understand the different human rights instruments and how they can be implemented to benefit individuals and communities in order that policies promoting human dignity do not stay on paper but are actively engaged;

(b) Put monitoring mechanisms in place to disclose policies to the concerned people;

(c) Ensure bottom-up education processes which provide women and girls with knowledge of their rights so that they are empowered to engage with legal institutions;

(d) Make legal empowerment one of the Millennium Development Goals;

(e) Introduce participatory forums for political, social, religious and economic decision-making to grass-roots levels by means of local consultative and inclusive neighbourhood organizations. In order for the voices of the marginalized and/or weak not to get drowned out, lost, or to go unheard, and for the people living in poverty not to remain voiceless, it is imperative that such forums remain small, face-to-face and community-based at every level. It is essential to ensure that such neighbourhood forums are federated at various levels of governance for wider reach and impact;

(f) Develop national policies to ensure the protection of the fundamental rights and basic living conditions of internally displaced people, in particular in respect of maternal and child health. Treaties or agreements on the respect for and dignified treatment of immigrants are essential. Laws, regulations and government information should be available in various languages and/or be made available through translation services;

(g) Ensure microfinancing for vulnerable people, enabling sustainable livelihood security across the world. The situation and the needs of vulnerable groups need to be recognized in Government policies. Over-indebted people need to be guaranteed access to basic banking services; financial education and advice

should be developed; and the social responsibility of financial institutions should be encouraged and monitored;

(h) Ensure that women, who are engaged in every sector of life, are equally represented at all levels of bureaucracy and in Government departments in order that there may be a proper balance of men and women in the workplace.